

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

AGRE-00 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /073 W

-----027810 071827Z /50

R 060815Z APR 78

FM AMCONSUL IBADAN

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1790

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L IBADAN 0385

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT ECON EAGR NI

SUBJECT: REACTION TO NEW LAND USE DECREE

REF: KADUNA 436, LAGOS 3969 (BOTH NOTAL)

REACTION TO THE NEW LAND USE DECREE ISSUED BY THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVT. MARCH 29 HAS BEEN SHARP AND NEGATIVE HERE. GOVT-CONTROLLED MEDIA WORKING HARD ON SELLING NEW DECREE, BUT ALMOST EVERYONE CONCERNED THAT DECREE DISRUPTS THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF LAND IN THE SOUTH.

1. MILGOV OF OYO STATE, BRIGADIER JEMIBEWON, WAS GIVEN THE UNENVIABLE TASK OF SPRINGING NEW LAND EDICT ON LAND-OWNERSHIP CONSCIOUS YORUBA AT MEETINGS PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY OBASANJO ON WEDNESDAY. THOSE WHO HEARD THE NEWS WERE INCREDULOUS, WORRIED, AND CONFUSED OVER A MEASURE WHICH WAS DEEMED UNPOPULAR AND UNWORKABLE EVEN BEFORE IT WAS UNDERSTOOD. JEMIBEWON IS SAID TO HAVE TAKEN EXTRA SECURITY MEASURES OVER LAST WEEKEND.

2. WEST AND SOUTH IN NIGERIA HAVE INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP/

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DEED LAND SYSTEM WHEREBY INDIVIDUALS OWN LAND EITHER BY FORMAL REGISTRATION OR BY TRADITION. OBAS MAY HAVE SOME RESIDUAL RIGHTS IN SOME LANDS AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL HOLDINGS. THERE ARE NUMEROUS HOLDERS OF SMALL PIECES OF LAND AND A SMALLER BUT IMPORTANT NUMBER OF LARGE LAND-HOLDERS. ALL THESE FEEL THREATENED BY THE NEW LAW. ONE PERSON (FORMER WESTERN STATE GOVERNOR ROTIMI WILLIAMS, HIMSELF THE HOLDER

OF 4,000 ACRES) COMMENTING BEFORE THE DECREE WAS ANNOUNCED, SAID THAT ON HEARING ABOUT THE NEW DECREE, HE ACCUSED THE INFORMANT OF SPREADING ANTI-GOVT RUMORS. SMALL HOLDERS ARE WORRIED ABOUT BEING ABLE TO PASS ON THEIR LAND TO THEIR CHILDREN. PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SAVING MONEY TO BUY LAND NOW BELIEVE THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE NEW BUREAUCRACY. THUS, THE MEASURE IS UNPOPULAR WITH BIG AND SMALL, RICH AND POOR.

3. THE DECREE IS THOUGHT TO CREATE BUREAUCRATIC PROBLEMS WHICH WILL BE ESSENTIALLY FOR THE NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENTS TO DEAL WITH. UNDER CIVILIAN RULE, THE DECREE CAN BE A POLITICAL ISSUE AS WELL AS A SOURCE OF GRAFT FOR THE HOLDERS OF POWER.

4. IN ALL, THE MOVE HAS NOT WON THE PRESENT REGIME ANY KUDOS AND ADDS TO THE CITIZENS' LIST OF COMPLAINTS.
HOYT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAND, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978IBADAN00385
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780151-0121
Format: TEL
From: IBADAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780487/aaaacvip.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 34965cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KADUNA 436, 78 LAGOS 3969
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3057539
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO NEW LAND USE DECREE
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ECON, EAGR, NI
To: LAGOS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/34965cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014